

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 30, 2007

From :  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 17: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 50 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for acquisition of APN 2821-009-020 in Devils Canyon in the Santa Susana Mountains, Upper Los Angeles River Watershed, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) in an amount not to exceed \$220,000 of Proposition 50 funds, for acquisition of APN 2821-009-020 in Devils Canyon in the Santa Susana Mountains, Upper Los Angeles River Watershed, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204 of the Public Resources Code states that

The conservancy may, in accordance with the priorities of the plan, do the following: . . . (c) Award grants . . . for the purpose of acquiring sites identified as necessary for park, recreation, or conservation purposes and for development of essential related public facilities.

Further, Section 79570(c) of the Water Code (Proposition 50) provides for funds to

. . . be expended for protection of the Los Angeles River watershed . . . , pursuant to Division 23 (commencing with Section 33000) of the Public Resources Code.

Background: The requested grant funds are for acquisition of an approximately 53-acre property (APN 2821-009-020) in Devils Canyon. If the acquisition is successful, the parcel would be preserved as natural parkland, would provide an important buffer for the other public parkland in the vicinity, provide trail resources, and provide protection of a significant sub-watershed of the Los Angeles River.

Devils Canyon is a headwaters tributary of the Los Angeles River, located in the Santa Susana Mountains above Chatsworth. Natural water courses in Devils, Ybarra, and Browns Canyon drain down through the densely populated areas of the San Fernando Valley and into the Los

Angeles River. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority has proposed acquisition of this property in the heart of Devils Canyon, located immediately adjacent to and east of the MRCA's 4800+acre Rocky Peak Park. The MRCA's 1700-acre Michael D. Antonovich Park at Joughin Ranch is also close by.

The subject property is undeveloped natural land with extensive oak woodland, walnut woodland, riparian, and coastal sage scrub resources, important to wildlife. The parcel would also provide a needed trail link along the bottom of the canyon for an eventual loop trail between Michael D. Antonovich Regional Park at Joughin Ranch and Rocky Peak Park. It is zoned A-2-2 in the County of Los Angeles.

The MRCA has a very recent appraisal for this and other parcels in the vicinity. The owners have indicated they are willing sellers.

The potential acquisition is within the Conservancy's Land Acquisition Workprogram listing for Devil/Ybarra Canyons-Central. Acquisition of this Upper Los Angeles River property would directly protect land and water resources and is consistent with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Land Acquisition Workprogram, the *San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Watershed and Open Space Plan* as adopted by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and the *Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan*.